

Los Angeles County Health Department's Initiatives

Los Angeles County has one of the largest and most diverse Asian and Pacific Islander (A&PI) communities in the nation. There are approximately 10 million residents in Los Angeles County, with A&PIs making up 12% of the population and accounting for 2% of living AIDS cases. Although 2% may seem small, Los Angeles has a high number of AIDS cases. As of June 2001, Los Angeles was the second leading metropolitan area reporting the highest number of cumulative AIDS cases with 42,796 cases, according to the CDC.¹

A&PI representation on LA County's Prevention Planning Committee (PPC) has always been reflective of the epidemic. There are currently two A&PI members on the 2002 PPC- 6% of the 32-member committee. In prior years, A&PIs have represented 4% to 10% of the PPC membership. Also, two A&PI members have served as community co-chairs during past terms of the PPC.

Indigenous A&PI organizations provide training and development opportunities for A&PIs recruited into Los Angeles' two planning bodies- the Title I CARE Act planning council and the PPC. Los Angeles has wisely engaged these community-based organizations to participate in local HIV prevention and care planning activities. For Los Angeles County, the Asian Pacific AIDS Intervention Team (APAIT) is the primary and most comprehensive of the A&PI HIV service providers. Over time, former members of APAIT's staff have joined mainstream AIDS service organizations, and have become important sources of information about A&PI communities for these organizations. Los Angeles has also taken steps to ensure that its contractors are involved in the community planning process. Recently, Los Angeles County changed contractual language to require HIV service providers to be actively involved in the PPC. Service providers are required to attend monthly meetings and encourage staff to participate in PPC subcommittee activities. To make A&PIs feel more welcomed and less isolated, one of the decisions that the PPC made for representation from smaller impacted populations, such as A&PI and transgender communities, was to have a minimum of two members representing a particular community.

The LA Office of AIDS Policy & Programs (OAPP) has also made it a priority to ensure that the office reflects the demographics of the community it serves. In addition to skills and experience, OAPP has adopted diversity as criteria to ensure that the demographics of OAPP staff reflect the community. A&PIs are representative in all OAPP divisions except in one division that is actively recruiting A&PI applicants. A&PIs are also working at all levels of management.

Coupled with efforts to involve A&PI communities in the CPG, Los Angeles also commits resources to strengthening the infrastructure of A&PI indigenous organizations. OAPP's Capacity Building Initiative identifies organizational capacity building and infrastructure development as critical to a community's ability to respond to the

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, HIV/AIDS Surveillance Report. 2001; 13 (1).

HIV/AIDS epidemic especially in emerging, underdeveloped and underserved communities. OAPP has invested considerable funds and resources to support organizational infrastructure development, such as board, staff, and management training, fiscal management, fundraising, information systems, and program development, including for CBOs serving A&PI communities.

For more information, please contact Dean M.Goishi, CDC Grants Manager, Los Angeles county Office of AIDS Programs and Policy (OAPP), at (213) 351-8133 or dgoishi@dhs.co.la.ca.us.